

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 12230

EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS1
TAGS: CASC, SHUM, CI
SUBJ: RAFAEL GONZALEZ VERDUGO

REF: SANTIAGO 12114

1. APPARENTLY LAUNCHING A TRIAL BALLOON, A SENIOR FONMINISTRY OFFICIAL SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT RAFAEL GONZALEZ BE "SMUGGLED" ABROAD PROVIDED HE NOT BE ALLOWED TO TALK ABOUT CHILE.

2. THE SUGGESTION WAS MADE BY FONMINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL JAIME LAVIN DEC. 29 TO EMBOFFS, WHEN ASKED WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY CHANGE IN THE GOC POSITION ON GONZALEZ. AFTER MAKING CLEAR THAT GONZALEZ WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE CHILE AS REQUESTED BY THE USG (SEPTTEL), LAVIN SAID CASUALLY THAT THE PERFECT "OUT" REGARDING THE GONZALEZ CASE, WHICH OTHERWISE APPEARED INSOLUBLE, WOULD BE FOR HIM TO BE "SMUGGLED" OF THE CHILE AND "DISAPPEAR" ABROAD. HE WOULD HAVE TO GO SOME PLACE WHERE HE WOULD NOT TALK ABOUT CHILEAN AFFAIRS, AND WHERE HE COULD ASSUME A NEW LIFE SO AS TO BE OUT OF DANGER. LAVIN OPINED THAT GONZALEZ WOULD BE A PERFECT TARGET FOR LEFTISTS INTERESTED IN DISCREDITING THE GOC.

3. COMMENT: WE TAKE LAVIN'S REMARK AS A TRIAL BALLOON.
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PAGE 02 SANTIA 12230 301948Z

LAVIN DID NOT INDICATE WHERE HE THOUGHT GONZALEZ MIGHT BE TAKEN. PERHAPS HE HAD IN MIND A FRIENDLY, CONSERVATIVE COUNTRY UNDER FIRM CONTROL WHERE SUCH A MAN'S ACTIVITIES COULD BE MONITORED, SUCH AS IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA, OR SOUTH AFRICA. IF HE WAS THINKING OF THE US, WE SEE SOME OBVIOUS DIFFICULTIES:

A) ASSUMING THAT THE USG COULD JUSTIFY ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS ENTERING INTO SUCH AN INFORMAL UNDERSTANDING WITH THE GOC, HOW COULD GONZALEZ BE KEPT SILENT?

B) MOREOVER, SUCH A MOVE WOULD NOT SATISFY US CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC INTEREST IN WHAT GONZALEZ MAY KNOW ABOUT THE CHARLES HORMAN DEATH AND THE CHILEAN SCENE IN GENERAL. INDEED, GONZALEZ' "DISAPPEARANCE" WOULD GIVE THE GOC ANOTHER BLACK EYE AND PUT THE US AND ITALIAN GOVERNMENTS UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE TO FIND HIM.

C) GONZALEZ MIGHT BE KILLED, NO MATTER WHAT COUNTRY TOOK HIM. LAVIN'S REMARK ABOUT LEFTIST INTEREST IN KILLING HIM IS NOT REASSURING.

4. THE DEPARTMENT MAY NEVERTHELESS WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER THIS APPROACH IS WORTH PURSUING. LAVIN ARRIVES IN WASHINGTON JANUARY 4 UNDER AN IV INVITATION. SOMEONE IN HIS CONFIDENCE -- PERHAPS CHILEAN DESK OFFICER ROBERT DRISCOLL-- MIGHT TRY TO EXPLORE LAVIN'S THOUGHT.
POPPER

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